



MEMORANDUM

April 4, 2003

TO: Board of Directors

From: Ray Tenney

Subject: Status of the "Yampa Management Plan"

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has been working on the development of the "Management Plan for Endangered Fishes in the Yampa River Basin - in light of current and projected future water depletions" since 2000. The "Yampa Management Plan" is now available in its final form for public review and comment. A significant portion of the implementation strategy in the Yampa Management Plan is the delivery of up to 7,000 acre-feet of stored water from the enlargement of Elkhead Reservoir for the maintenance of stream flows near Maybell.

The FWS has identified desired minimum flows for the Yampa River at the Maybell gage of 93 cfs. Modeling by the CWCB using StateMOD and StateCU for the Yampa River suggests that 7,000 acre-feet of storage water from Elkhead Reservoir enlargement will meet this need under current demands and with growth anticipated through 2045. Other elements of the Yampa Management Plan include:

- removal of northern pike and small mouth bass from the Yampa River, fish to be salvaged and relocated to publically accessible fishing waters
- screening of channel edge habitats and "backwaters" to preclude northern pike access and spawning
- stocking of native fishes
- screening of Elkhead Reservoir's outlet and spillway if necessary to contain non-native fishes
- fish passage where necessary to allow migration of the native and listed fishes
- consumptive use of water including existing depletions and 30,000 acre-feet of new depletions (expandable by an additional 20,000 acre-feet upon future review)

The FWS will be conducting public meetings the week of May 19, in Steamboat Springs (19th), Baggs (20th) and Craig (21st) to collect public input. The plan will then be finalized and an environmental assessment completed by the end of August 2003. The programmatic biological opinion and the agreement to implement the Yampa Management Plan could be completed as early as the end of September if all goes well.

The permitting for the Elkhead Reservoir Enlargement project needs to follow the Yampa Management Plan permitting process. The storage pool in the enlarged Elkhead Reservoir for endangered fish flow augmentation is a significant portion of the “need” for the Elkhead enlargement project. We need to have the Management Plan and its NEPA process completed to be able to obtain a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit to construct the dam enlargement.

In order to keep things moving smoothly ahead the USACOE has agreed to “piggy-back” on the public meetings for the Yampa Management Plan. The USACOE will issue the public notice for the Elkhead Reservoir enlargement 404 permit and take input on the project at the same public meetings in May.